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YOUTH'S PILGRIMAGE

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**YOUTH'S
PILGRIMAGE**

ROY HELTON



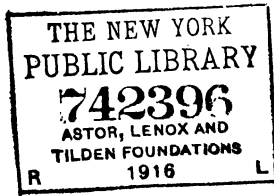
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YOUTH'S PILGRIMAGE

YOUTH'S PILGRIMAGE

The mist of morning like a dream spun prayer
Skeined in the sleep of flowers, stirred to greet
The trembling hope of dawn; the star fraught air
Grew vocal in low tenderness of meek
High anthems, plaintive utterance of birds
Pleading for pity with no want of words
To Light, their fiery lord. And lo, the cheek

Empyrean, at their psalm did throb and thrill;
The sun crept up; wisp clouds like fire, rolled
Faint crimson scud of heaven to crown the hills:
And herald hierarchs winging, flush with gold,
Flamed day into her glory. In her bower
Fronting the sunrise in the sheerest tower
That topped the spires and every glittering hold

Of Childhood's habitation, Rosabel
Rose timidly and thrust the rustling shade
Of silken curtains wide: a nimbus fell
Sheen on her sunny hair that stirred and strayed
Down her white shoulders to her pulsing side,
Warm in the gush of summer. Loath to hide
These beauties from the day their tendrils played

Youth's Pilgrimage

Flashing among the nimble moats. Agaze
Over wide crimsoning meadows to the sea
Her eyes were tranced with beauty, and the maze
Of shadowy lanes teased her brown feet; each tree
Called with inviting arms, and choral song
Made lovely every leaf. She paused not long,
But to each window stealing wistfully

Gazed out one moment: lo, a forest dim
Huddled in numberless gloomy hills did run
Endlessly to the south and vapors grim
Swung heavily on the treetops, where the sun
Pierced not at hottest noonday. Toward the West
And North, above a long white wall, there rest
Warm quivering mists of everlasting dawn.

"Oh grim consuming world, thy mysteries
Of linked and various metaled days, enchain
My soul," she cried, "Thy heavy mists that rise
From bleeding embers of youth sunk and slain,
Lure me from this too calm, too lucid air,
To seek, with him, thy gloom, thy chill despair,
To whirl in stormy passion and to dare
Thy frantic joy that is the kin of pain!

Youth's Pilgrimage

"I fear thee, yet I draw apace upon thee:
Shudder and yet grow nigh thee day by day;
And love that binds my heart and fate that won me
Claim sacrifice and barter no delay.
Oh Childhood, thou art dying, thou art sped,
In him I love thou liest white and dead—
A little corpse with roses wound and wed,
Laid by moist April in the lap of May!"

Then through the toss of clouds one moment gleam-
ed
Far glimpses of quick light like the flash of wings,
And round her tower swept solemn song that seemed
Missioned with memory of soul wanderings
In the fair elder regions beyond birth.
Oh song! How very seldom in the dearth
Of human hearts, thy sacred summonings

Stir the old breathless dreams that liberate
The soil mewed spirit to one moment's winging!
How silent is thy consort as we wait
Nightly below the stars; how in the singing
Of Merle and Skylark do we vainly hope
For note of thy revealing voice, or grope
Where dim cathedral's lonely spark is swinging,

Youth's Pilgrimage

Or stoop in candled holiness to prayer
Yet find thee silent still: thy voice doth cease
To lord earth's solitudes and to the air
Of hilltops hath grown strange; thy tones increase
Like organ notes, these days, mid murk and moil
Where one soul thrills with glory of its toil,
Or hungered child hath joy, who needs not least.

Yet in her heart thy calling voice did rise,
Shrill as the morning pean of the lark,
And mist and sorrow dazzled from her eyes
Like night's cloak touched by dawn's enkindling
spark.

"Come woe!" she cried, "Or pain, if pain must be,
And blinding passions cast thy pall on me;
Burn me or chain with chains, I still am free
While there is love to lamp me through the dark!"

Then down from her tower she swept with a heart
that was song,
And the ferns and the flowers were mad for the
flash of her feet
They fondled the grass like the sunbeams aflush at
the dawn
In dalliance with the clover's dewy sweet;

Youth's Pilgrimage

But her lover had waited and watched till his eyes
were dim;
As she came a shroud of sorrow swept over him:
With a smile that was sadder than tears did he turn,
did he greet

Her kiss, her joy, her pity, yea her fear;
And cried, "Ah might I see thee ever young
And everlasting fair as now, and hear
Thy greeting like a waterfall whose tongue
Utters continual music to all hours!
But I have lost the favor of life's flowers
No songs of joy may from my lips be flung."

"What, do you hold my kisses in disdain?"
Cried Rosabel, "And stand aloof from me?"
"My kiss upon your brow would print a stain,"
He answered, "That might not assoilzied be.
My love's fair tree is girt by dreams that cling
Like foul vines round the leafy slumbering
Of reaching oaks, and make a loathsome thing
Of mine own flesh, when I walk forth with thee."

Youth's Pilgrimage

"Dreams?" "I have had them too." "But such as
mine

Poison the very stock they feed upon.
Thy love," he cried, "I held a thing divine—
Closer than seeping showers or the sun,
To that unseen but throbbing vital heart
That all ensanguined beauties doth impart
To things yet fresh in being or scarce begun.

Last night I dreamed of you, dreamed that you came
And called me softly through the summer night;
Came like a brown wren singing on my name
Until the warm air trembled with delight:
The warm air trembled when my little maiden
Came like an elf with wild flowers overladen;
The stars had never seen so sweet a sight.

But I—what did I then? I need be brave
To speak the words that must make love grow less,
Yet should I prove Love's renegade to have
On old false terms thy heart's young tenderness:
I cannot see thee through familiar eyes
For blinding passions in my soul arise
Like mists that in the deep September skies
Veil dying summer's languid loveliness.

Youth's Pilgrimage

Your arms that came around me in the dark
Begot a sudden rapture in my dream—
A joy—pure joy it seemed—a sudden spark
Falling sky deep from an ungathered gleam
Of passion burning and untempered fire;
But sudden in its stead sprang dark desire
Groping in night without one starry beam:

Desire, blind, not knowing what it sought,
But hot within the bliss of thy warm arms:
To hold thee flesh to flesh, till life and thought
Were crushed in the enfolding of thy charms:
To let my lips and fingers find a nest
Upon the swaying summer of thy breast
And feel thee tremble deep to strange alarms.

To let my hands sweep round thy gracile thighs
To print the scarlet stain of kisses there"—
"Enough!" cried Rosabel, whose fluttering eyes
Sought shelter in the garment of her hair.
She trembled at the tempest in her brain;
Searching for words, found but a calling pain:
Sought virtue that was snow and found deep stain
Crimson upon cold lips grown sudden fair.

Youth's Pilgrimage

Fear called, but like the wail of driven fire
Fanned till the fanning wind is drunk and quelled,
His passion overmastered her desire,
As rivers from a sluggish fountain welled
Spread warmly as they drift against the sea;
And yet her eyes in downcast modesty
Faltered as though toward tears: right maidenly
A blush stole where her bosom sank and swelled.

"Thou slayest the immortal innocence of heart,"
She sighed, "for bounties brief that fade and fall."
"Both soul and flesh I love," he cried, "Thou art
Sheer loveliness, a soul in flower, a call
From Heaven to quicken the dull heart of earth.
Some rapture of God's spirit gave thee birth.
Yea, thou art sister to the clouds, to all

The brood that sunlight on the summer seas
Begetteth for cool pillowing of air:
Yet thou art fading too as one of these:
Brief bridals now thy flushing beauties wear
But darkness falls. Oh God! Even love seems
lost—
Sighed to the gulf of years like blown leaves tossed
Seaward from branches clashing, cold and bare.

Youth's Pilgrimage

Oh drink earth's stoup of joy and if love die
Let it die warmly! Come and I shall fold
Its flower 'twixt thy breast and mine, to lie
Garnered immortal hours from the cold,
To quicken with perpetual birth each dawn,
Grown older than the moon, until the wan
And jealous starlight break to sunny gold

Upon the morning hills. Have you not seen
Two wrens like lovers wooing in the trees
And watched them weave a nest of grey and green,
A little house of summer and warm ease;
And then their speckled eggs on the downy litter,
And then the yellow mouths that reach and twitter,
And last, faint fledglings fluttering in the breeze?.

Joy, innocence are there. Dear child, it seems
The very flowers are more wise than we;
The soundless passage of a summer dream
Seems not less real and beautiful to me
Than this blind maze wherein our lives entwine.
Thy flowerlike frail form is not as mine,
As though to some deep purpose we combine
Our various flesh in deathless unity."

Youth's Pilgrimage

She trembled as he spoke—trembled as one
That feels the breath of tempests or the sweep
Of surging waters or the voiceless run
Of time, drag down his life and may not weep
The loss too dear for sorrow, but being brave
Bends to the tempest or the searching wave,
Then, first of all his days, tastes joys that lave
His eyelids like cool summonings of sleep.

Her heart cried, but her lips for shame were dumb,
"Oh man, my life, my soul are thine to spend!
Go, I will follow; lead and I will come—
Where hills are highest or dark waters bend
Under the knees of mountains!" but he heard
Not the faint whisper of that breathless word
And cried at last, "Too long my life is penned

In this deceiving realm where the fairest flowers
Root in the deepest murk of earth. I go
To search life's secrets mid the chastening showers
Of cold and biting rain; where shrill winds blow
Wild trumpet to the lightnings and deep thunder
Booms to the echoing crags: where earthquakes
sunder
The stolid hearts of mountains and the flow

Youth's Pilgrimage

Of streams hath moaning passion for the sea.
The deep wood calls my feet and I grow fonder
Of silence than of song. But now for thee
The dance waits on the meadow. I shall wander
Along this stream down to the crimson gate
Where through the distant siren voice of Fate
Calls to forbidden ears, and there await
Thy parting word." Her cheeks grew white, but
wonder

Died in her flashing eyes ere he had gone
Lost in the flutter of leaves. The woodland delves
Were tenantless, but on each upland lawn
And on each mead that seaward slopes and shelves
Young troupes of boys were dancing to glad notes
First fluttered from warm nests, in virgin throats
Of maidens singing nooked like woodland elves.

Lo! One all garlanded with yellow clover:
Like great gold stars swarmed in a summer sky
They lay amid her hair's dim beauty. Over
Another's brow dark ivy leaves did try
Soft touch to mend the pale perfection there.
Young numerous loveliness, too loath, too rare
For my rude quill to mar with earthen dye.

Youth's Pilgrimage

To their bright choir came deep eyed Rosabel
With measures strange to chide their merry singing:
Chiming what consort round her tower did swell,
To whose wild notes the nimble echoes ringing
Raged to repentant silences. The sea
Swept shoreward to be wooed and wonderingly
Warded its stillness where no birds were winging.

Deep in a covert mid the silent leaves
Her lover lingered, till the chant was ended
Melting in mazy murmur that receives
New sinuous sweetness from warm paths it wend-
ed—

Dwelling in sunlight on the odorant airs,
Drooping to earth down twenty twining stairs
Among the boughs whose moaning it hath mended.

The world, the sky were mute until the harp
Of the wide hearkening hills rehearsed her numbers,
Thrilling the earth's celled stillness with the sharp
Sting of remembered labors lapsed in slumbers
Too rathely reft. The descant of the sea
Wakes in droned dreariment. The strutted bee
Glutting with golden gain his flight encumbers.

Youth's Pilgrimage

Then Philemon turned, sighing, "I can bear
No old companions of my boyish mirth;
No eyes to mark my stains; no heart to share
My sorrows but the eyeless heart of earth,
And Rosabel's. Oh may sweet pity find
Love through my fault to keep her close and kind
Until old love begets a second birth!"

He burrowed down through delves of cool caress
Into the silence of untrodden ways,
Where trailing vines in futile tenderness
Held his still neighborings with soft delays.
And then before him rose the crimson gate
Where he must rest till sunset and await
His love, slow stealing through the purple haze.

"Aye, if she come," he cried. Beyond the door
That, like a ruby in dull sandstone set,
Centered his eyes, there came a sullen roar
Of countless marching multitudes, the fret
Of battling ocean and the wail of tense
And white fanged storm, and afterwards long
silence.
The listener stirred no breath till his brow was wet

Youth's Pilgrimage

With feverish dew, and then he rose and flung
Ajar the brazen dosel of the door,
And on a dry turf sprang, knee deep among
A realm of flowery sunsets. Lo! The floor
Of this new region floated to the sea
In waves of violet hillbrows, and the lea
Lay purpled like calm waters far from shore,

Attired in unnumbered loveliness:
Clover and violet, robes of christening Spring,
And asters dropped from Heaven's gate to bless
Autumnal fervors fled. The seasons cling
Dreamfully here with azure arms entwined
Babe on the breast of mother, sleeping, vined
By clouds that hover like an angel's wing.

The little door slid shut without one sound;
He found no sign of it how hard he peered;
Only a grim grey wall that reached around
Coldly, as something to be greatly feared.
A twig snapped in the thicket, and he turned
To greet a man in whose old eyes there burned
Dim fires, that scarce enobled or endeared.

Youth's Pilgrimage

"Alas, my son," he cried, "You look too late!
No hour spent returns; no will can stem
The marching tide of time. That little gate
Is shut on Childhood's joys. Remember them
But look for them no more. Here shalt thou find
The elect whom mounting passions may not blind
Nor lend false heart for strife or stratagem.

"We are a kindly and a temperate race;
A twilight folk, for I am one of these:
We walk life's border and have skill to trace
Afar, the fangs of serpent twining ease
Sapping the scarlet from the lips of men:
Afar—aye very far, my eyes can ken
The myrmidons that battle and then cease,

"The hosts that throb with passion and then cool,
Cruel or sharp as jags of Arctic snow;
The laboring monarch and the fatted fool,
The great ones risen high by creeping low
To kiss the feet of empire, or to shower
Soft praises on the harlot of the hour
To win one nod of favor ere they go.

Youth's Pilgrimage

"We watch and smile but neither reap nor sow."
A crowd of men and women through the vale
Tripped by them as he spoke with footing slow;
And some were simpering and some were pale—
Smooth empty faces dull, but gently kind,
Or dim and studious eyes, but all grown blind
Alike to loveliness of bower or dale.

"May I be one of ye?" cried Philemon,
"And with ye drain life's rummer to the lees,
To search the seepings whose corruptions run
Toward death, and master birth's warm mysteries?"
Some gnawed their fingers when he spake and some
Simpered and others trembling and grown dumb
Made show to turn aside their timorous eyes.

The old man bit his beard and rumbled out,
"Birth and begetting—shame of shames and sin
Of hideous sins! Go seek some wanton rout
In yonder forest where deeds shameless, win
The thunder of deep curses from God's tongue,
And there find answer. Shameless and so young!"
And "Shameless," shrilled his crew in voices thin.

Youth's Pilgrimage

He left them then and pulsed with easier breath
To hear their sly sneers and contagious scorn
Wane on the queasy wind; but even death
And life partook this sin of being born!
"The birds are shameful then and the seeding
flowers,"

He cried. "There seems no beauty in life's hours
Save stars and moonlight and the purpling morn!"

His heart denied his tongue, and long he stood
Blended by inward lightnings, all amaze,
Like a young doe far from its mothering wood
While all the earth is smitten with the blaze
Of hostile fire and disrooting storm,
Then silence and sunlight: skies grown sudden
warm

And blighted beauty in familiar form,
Fragrant and calling, through the chastened brays.

The murmur of the waterfalls that leap
Down from the land of Childhood to the sea,
Commercing of its fragrance utters sleep
Whose balmy pillowings and melodious plea
Soothed the poor sated eyes. And there a mound
Invited with soft bedding leaves, hedged round
With fragrant pines. "I'll lie beneath some tree,"

Youth's Pilgrimage

He murmured, half a dream, "And watch the sun
Turn Midas at the twilight." Ere he gained
The hilltop, sleep forsook the web she spun
To veil his eye's blue beauty. Wonder reigned
Lone naiad then in all their watery deeps
And in his fervid heart new kingdom keeps:
For he hath clambered to the peak, hot veined

To gulp the brimming bounty of the land
At one unbreathing drain: the hills, the sea,
The long white wall that girdled like a band
The Tyrian plush of earth's fertility,
And to the south, beyond the hills, the loom
Of bleak and awful forests in whose gloom
White sudden faces seemed to peer, and flee

Deeper into their den of dark within.
He mused, "Have I not seen some woodland thing:
Hoar Sagittarian with bearded chin
Through hazel copse the tear eyed fawn pursuing,
Or brown haired Dryad starting from her tree
Armful of golden missives, tremblingly
Cast on the brook's face to advance her wooing?"

Youth's Pilgrimage

Or was it one rare glint of sunlight claiming
Warm nurture of a Macnad's tressy brow?
Or was it some strange creature past my naming?
Even as he mused the neighboring hedges bow
And part with timorous urge of rosy fingers;
Then, faltering like a maiden bride who lingers
To make more dear the purchase of her vow

A woman came, veiled in a mist of blue
Caught out of the young heavens to disguise
The firm and rosy flesh, that flushing through
Like mountain heads at dawn against the skies,
Seemed builded out of sunlight and high air
To woofs more cloud ensnaring and more rare;
Above like sunrise streamed her golden hair,
But there were velvet bands across her eyes.

She gazed on him, and swaying as she stood,
His eyes drank in the wonder of her form,
Searching her gracious wealth of womanhood,
Its loveliness and verdure, shyly warm.
She caught the tribute of his eyes and said,
"I am not of yon pale folk, living dead,
That have no tongue for tasting sun or storm!

Youth's Pilgrimage

"I live where men are mighty, and the fresh
And vital beauty of the earth has sway;
Where spirit calls to spirit, and flesh to flesh;
Where joy and pain and passion, sweep and sway
The writhing hearts of men as storm sways trees
That scarp the northern passage of the seas
And bend and sing, yet grow more green and grey.

"Our glory warm begetting, death and birth
And all the sunny joys that lie between:
Pain making deep the loveliness of earth;
Eyes passion-fondling where blind peace hath been."
"Tell me," he cried, "Is there no shame in this?"
"No shame," she sighed, "Save where grim virtue
is—

Shame in no birth nor shame in any bliss
That warms from smiles and dies into a kiss;
If there be foulness speak when thou hast seen!"—

Beyond the wide arms of the eastern wall
Faint through the mellowing veil of evening mist
A plumed tower rose divinely tall;
Like white spars meshed in ocean's amethyst
It seemed to sway on piers too frail to bear
Its burden,—like a cloud twixt earth and air;
Frail scuds of vapor yellow like long hair
Fell round the stains day's dying fervor kissed.

Youth's Pilgrimage

Lo on its side a gate of crimson fold
Gave sudden passage to a streaming flood
That pooled about the tower and unrolled
The sunset sky sunk in a sea of blood.
Like plumes of pines by hostile tempests driven,
Like mountains by the taloned earthquake riven,
Like ghosts that face the throne of God unshriven,
The tower writhed and faltered where it stood;

And then fled faltering through the oozy door
A child white browed like one faint fluttering star
Lured from the porch of Heaven, and then one more,
With timorous rosy limbs and feet that were
It seemed scarce mated to the rugged earth,
All trembling at the tumult of their birth,
And frail like angels that have flown too far.

Then silence fell like sleep. The children fled
Now, hillward finding savor of their striving:
One only lingered, whom the honied head
Of clover tempted oft to tasteful hiving:
Nuzzling her lips to nibble cool delights
And bounding o'er the grass in little flights
To suck each sheaf reared for her shy depriving.

Youth's Pilgrimage

Ah! She is gone and Philemon hath traced
Along the wall the glimmer of her hair
Gliding toward darkness like a moon erased
Timelessly by great waters: then the bare
Stark loveliness of even stirred toward sleep.
The woman cried, "Night comes and thou must
keep

Vigilant eyelids, for dim Death doth creep
Serpentwise through the trees and wintering air."

Lo! His first victim comes: a gleam, a quiver
Like white wings poising through the mazy sheaves
Of larches denizen'd by doves; a shiver
And toss of the low furze that clings and cleaves
Written in timeless birth; a slender shape
Pilloried with caught hair against the gape
Of trembling branches—hair like autumn leaves

Sun-mellowed a long harvest time: she starts
Palsied with blinking terror at the light,
Shakes her proud head until the bright strands part,
Shrinks darkly, then bursts forth with sudden flight
Footing now air, now flowers, with rosy flash
Of slender frantic limbs. A dewy lash
Hovereth like the weeping clouds of night

Youth's Pilgrimage

That drench a glorious sunset. "She hath seen,"
He thought, "Eternal sorrows bud to joy;
Her nights have mellowed with the lonely teen
Of tears, and caught calm wisdom of the cloy
And solitude of grief that weeping mars.
Her eyes have drunken silence of the stars."
Over the purple tod on high employ

They guide; she lifts and flies; a door looms wide
And gulps her like the reach of waiting arms.
A bell booms thrice and lo! On every side
Bent forms creep forth to welcome its alarms.
The high trees sigh with universal breathing:
Forth dart high breasted youths with myrtle wreath-
ing
Their brows, and ivy culled with woodland charms

To crown a holiday. Wind tousled hair
Back fluttered like pale languid flames; the sheen
Of sunset played soft lightnings on thighs bare
Above the trailing of their garments green.
One maid, white fleshed in billowing beauty, bore
Heedfully high a cup half drained. She wore
A fillet of white roses, and between

Youth's Pilgrimage

Each rose a whiter blossom of the tree:
And after her another, then one more:
Like eddies landward folding on the lea
Of purple waters to the summoning shore
Swept the tumultuous tide, and lo! The yawn
Of that dark door hath sucked the fairest; on
Whelmeth the tardy spindrift then, outpour

Of queasy pools. With mulling lips they tarried
And tossed complaining fingers to the sun,
Beside hoar sires whose tottering haste they harried
To barter for delay. The plea begun
Spent querulously and the lips grew still—
So passed they one by one, the fair, the ill,
Sere shoots, lush younglings by one frost foredone,

Lapsed sunlessly alike to little dooms.
One cometh last, aslant the craggy shore
Paltering up the sea bank, with the blooms
Of ocean ribboning his hair. The pour
Of dribbling brine made patter on the leaves
Where through he crooks his clammy way. He
 heaves
Wearily back his head, to blink once more

Youth's Pilgrimage

The fervor of the sun. Blue gaunt and old
He stood. His rolling eyeballs could not wink
Their matted coverlids; the flowers would fold
And fade he looked on. From their dooms ashrink
He hunched to the bleaker wall; the door gaped
black;

He stared with cunning lurch; peered in; leaped
back;

Then sidelong through the gate with hideous slink
Made passage to the dark. . . . The gazers
shifted

Slow sated eyes, now left, now right; the hill
In Youth's smooth slumbers lay; a grass blade lifted
Sharply with sputter of dew; the whip-poor-will
Had cadenced in the twilight; not the stirring
Of one slow slender leaf forbade the purring
Of sorrow searching waterfalls, that still

Monotonous music forth and solemnize
The vespers of the violet. Like a flower
Unfolding sudden fragrance to the skies,
Or jasmine wooing night moths to its bower
By odorous magic of its suing breath,
The woman rose, and murmured, "Birth and
Death—

These hast thou seen, and now it is the hour

Youth's Pilgrimage

When I am gathered to the hosts that throng
High revels in the wilderness of night,
And greet the passionate moon with Bromian song.
So I must leave thee." Did his eyes invite
The trembling challenge that her bosom gave?
Or did her hurried breathings droop to crave
Some sweeter surfeit of more dear delight?

The wind with sudden gust unloosed her hair
And bathed in fragrant folds his brow and eyes,
And widening her loose robe, swept warm and bare
Her throbbing bosom's fountained mysteries,
Hungry for kisses, dimpling for the press
Of fondling fingers, and the warm caress
Of staining lips to bid the warm blood rise.

Her hair was tingling round him and his brain
Swam in a sea of passion, bold but blind.
The blood was sighing in his bursting veins;
And then she swayed and then their arms entwined;
The foison of her flaming womanhood
Lay burning in his fingers. Through the wood
No sound was ushered save the soothing wind

Youth's Pilgrimage

Whose sobbing murmur sued upon his ear
Pregnant with memory; and through the leaves
The pines' sharp searching savor seemed to bear
Reproach of sunny hillsides and the sheaves
Of gathered daisies and the dappled lawn;
Of rosy dancing feet that flamed thereon
Leaping like sunlight toward the sinking sun,
And pigeons cooing in the twilight eaves.

"Oh God!" he cried, "My soul be master still!"
Then caught a breath that drove the cooling air
Deep in his fainting breast, like winter's chill
Down riven to some sultry valley lair
From heads of indistinguishable mountains,
Whitening song to snow; joy's tressy fountains
Knitting in pallid skeins of frozen hair.

Feebly he faltered from the hot embrace
And broke the cincture of her chaining arms;
He spoke but dared not look upon her face
Whose baffled blood took flight in mute alarms:
And then shame's sluggish flood did stem, and start
Back from the violation of her heart,
And then fear whitened on each tender part
Like swift snow rained from out a sunset storm.

Youth's Pilgrimage

"Oh woman! woman! Help me to be strong,"
He cried with man's triumphant selfishness,
"Surely in bliss so high there lurks great wrong
For love should flame when bosoms bend and press;
This mutual joy welds like the tongues of fire
Bodies and souls that mate in high desire
And merge and meld in mutual tenderness.

" 'Tis that not you nor I should aught profane
This rite so hoarded through life's secret hours,
But guard the vigilant fire of this fane
And set its door in being's inmost bowers,
So when the true high chosen acolyte
Knocks at the last our clear joy may invite
To share the untasted banquet of delight
In innocence and beauty like young flowers;

"Look, thou hast shown me Death; I found it wise
Daring or hideous as men may choose.
I gazed on Birth and wondered with wet eyes,
And last I ken joy's clearest ray that embrues
Love even, needing least, with deepest grain,
Making soul manifest through murk and stain,
But if the soul be banished shrunk or slain
The hidden dearth betrays its paltry shows,"

Youth's Pilgrimage

The woman rose and hid her wounded eyes
And bound her robe right stiffly cross her breast.
These words she spake, "The innocence that lies
Folden in flowers that the warm airs invest
With tarnishing and little current gold,
Crisps and grows countless when the clouds uprolled
Blight and devour and the frosts come cold
Out of the aging bosom of the west.

"Then innocence chills to a frozen pride
Like ancient blood that shirks the breeding soil,
Or like the jeweled fingers of a bride
Proudly aloof the murk of tainting toil,
Then cruddled or grown swale when youth is done
Grows to a thing that wise men smile upon
But all men flee whose hopes it may despoil;

"Joys too long hoarded when disclosed at last
Are like fair apples garnered gainst the cold,
Dearly held off till Autumn's need is past
And Winter yields a shriveled few and old,
Crabbed and bitter to the frozen tongue.
Spend like a wanton then while lust is young:
Time maketh chill the touch of gathered gold."

Youth's Pilgrimage

She waited for no answer, but was gone
Swift as a sigh amid the cleaving flowers,
And left him deep disconsolate and lone
To mark the droning passage of the hours;
To call, until his throbbing heart was flung
Into the panting fervor of his tongue,
"Oh Rosabel, lie safe in Childhood's bowers

"Cool innocence sway round thy mossy sleep,
But dream of me, O love! Let memory
Purge me in that clean fountain that doth keep
The luster of thy warm virginity—
Oh fair love, dream of me!" The searching cry
Roamed through night's hollow chambers drearily,
And the grey wall echoed "Dream, O Dream of me."

"I have kept faith," he cried, "O Rosabel,
With love, with thee; I care not if 'twere wise
To leave joy's showered blossoms where they fell—
The innocence of thine untutored eyes
Is with me now. Aye, and my will shall keep
Thy body from the license of my sleep
Safe from my dream's despoiling ecstasies."

Youth's Pilgrimage

A murmur thrilled the leaves even as he spoke:
Swift feet pressed through the flowers, like a song
Wooded from the gathered corn by the tender stroke
Of Autumn's airy raiment, and along
The hill path with soft whispers of his name,
With call of reaching arms, a woman came
And kneeling, sank before him with no shame,
Crying, "Oh look on me, then be thou strong

"In love as thou hast stalwart been in faith,
If thou dost love." "Aye, girl, I love so well,"
He cried, "That thou seemest scarce such wind
wrought wraith

Of naked beauty even, this flesh fed spell
Forms, from the lees of passion in my heart.
Begone!" "Look once on me and I depart,"
She cried. He turned: her veiling hair did part
And showed the kindling eyes of Rosabel.

Youth's Pilgrimage

Voiceless he gazed; then through the twilight dart-
ing

Timorous as a fawn she came; the reach
Of wide flung arms; a cry; the glad lips parting;
A sigh like the sea as they melted each to each.
They sank with mingled hair, the black and gold
Woven like patterning moonlight on the old
Dark floor of forests, and their souls impleach
With fellowship of intermingled fate

Like oak and ivy that have grown together,
And make their gentle lives a single date,
And bend or rise before the stress of weather
As but a single being, neer apart.
So these two lovers lingered heart to heart.
At last she murmured, "Love, no time shall sever

"Lives knit by passion and through pain grown
wise."

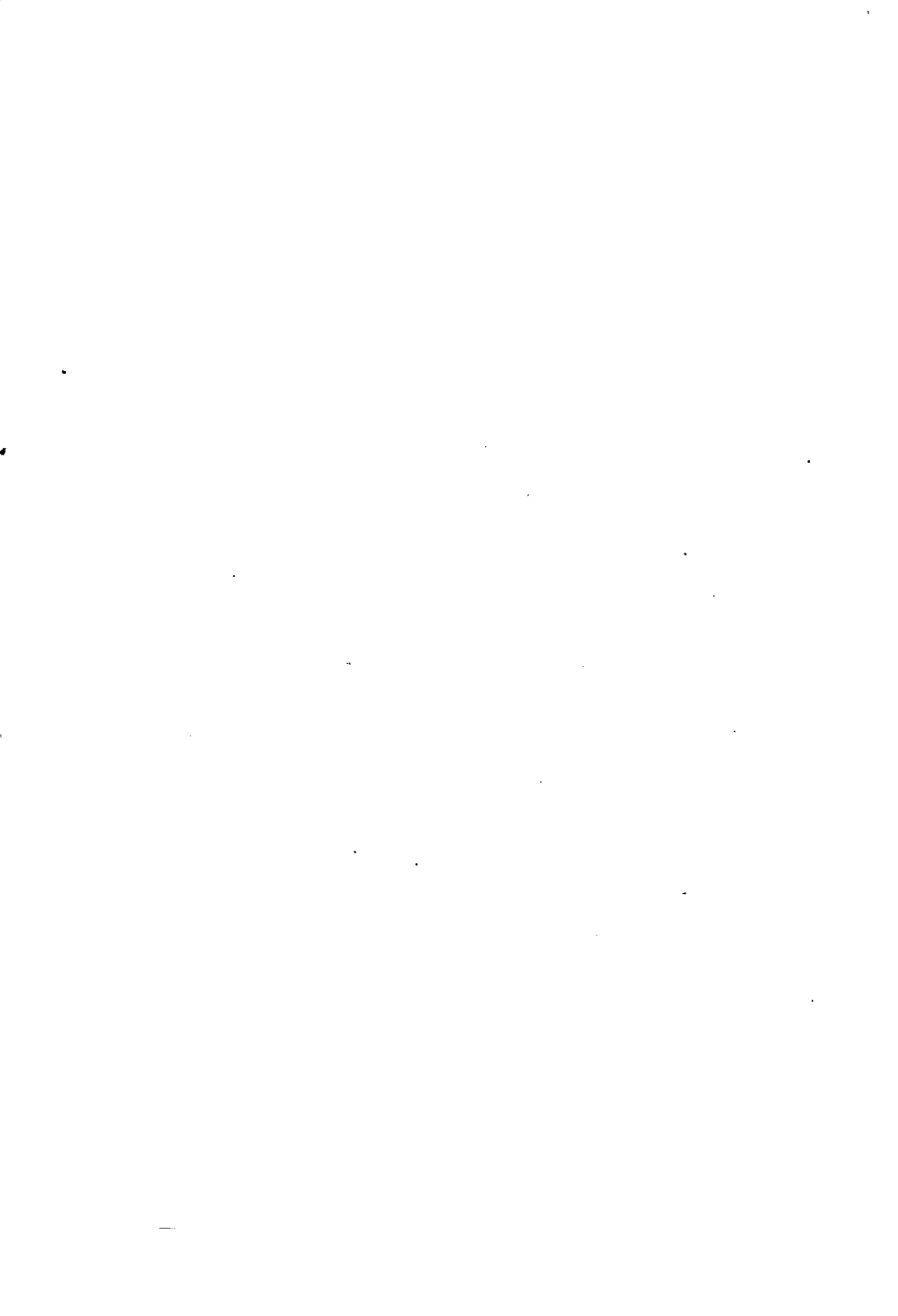
His lips made answer, and they turned and slept
Pillowed on clover heads. Their wearied eyes
Were gauzed with trembling canopies that had crept
Whitely from lily cups to shield their dreams.
His arm now steals across her brow and gleams
Slenderly pale as though the moon had kept

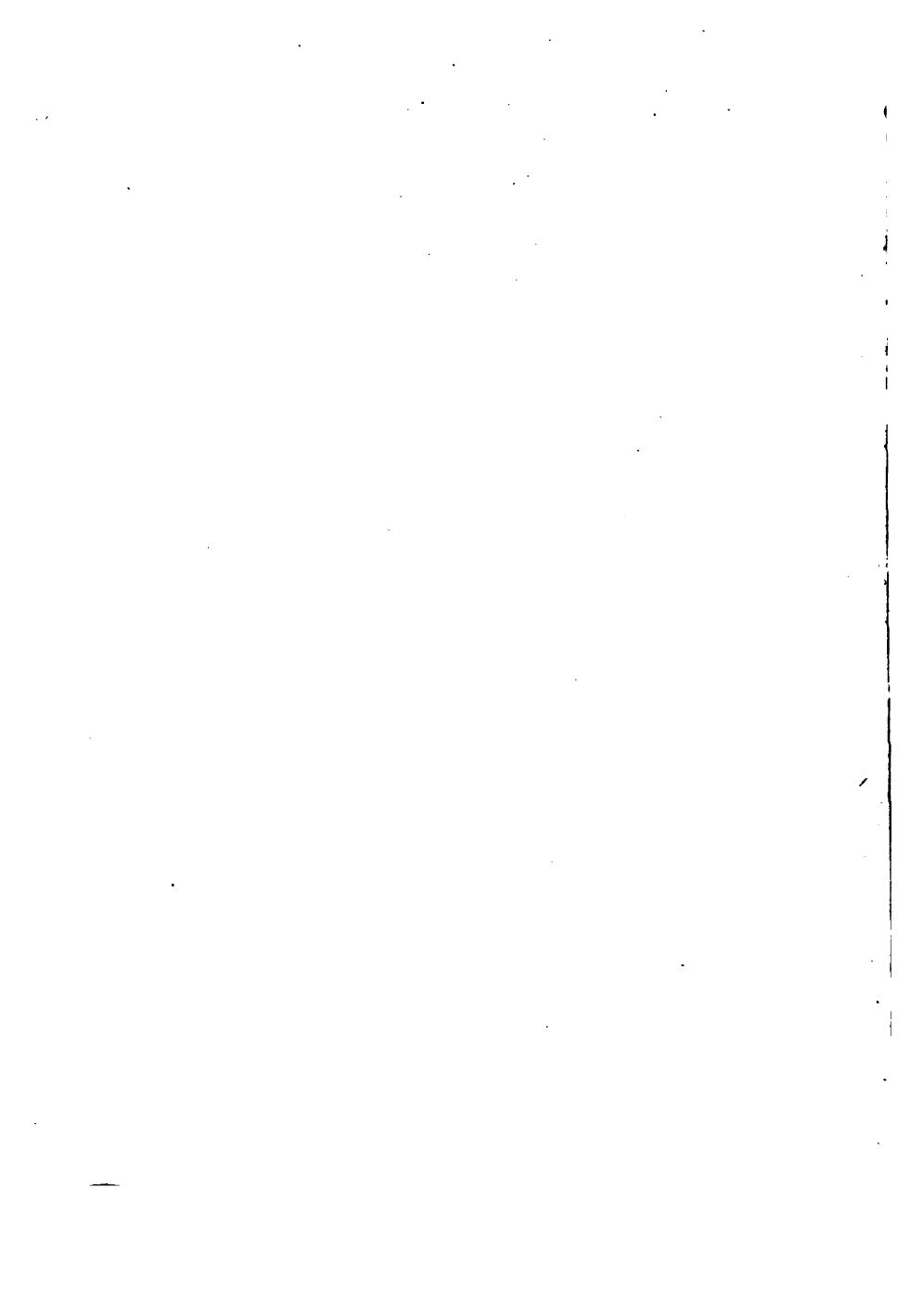
Youth's Pilgrimage

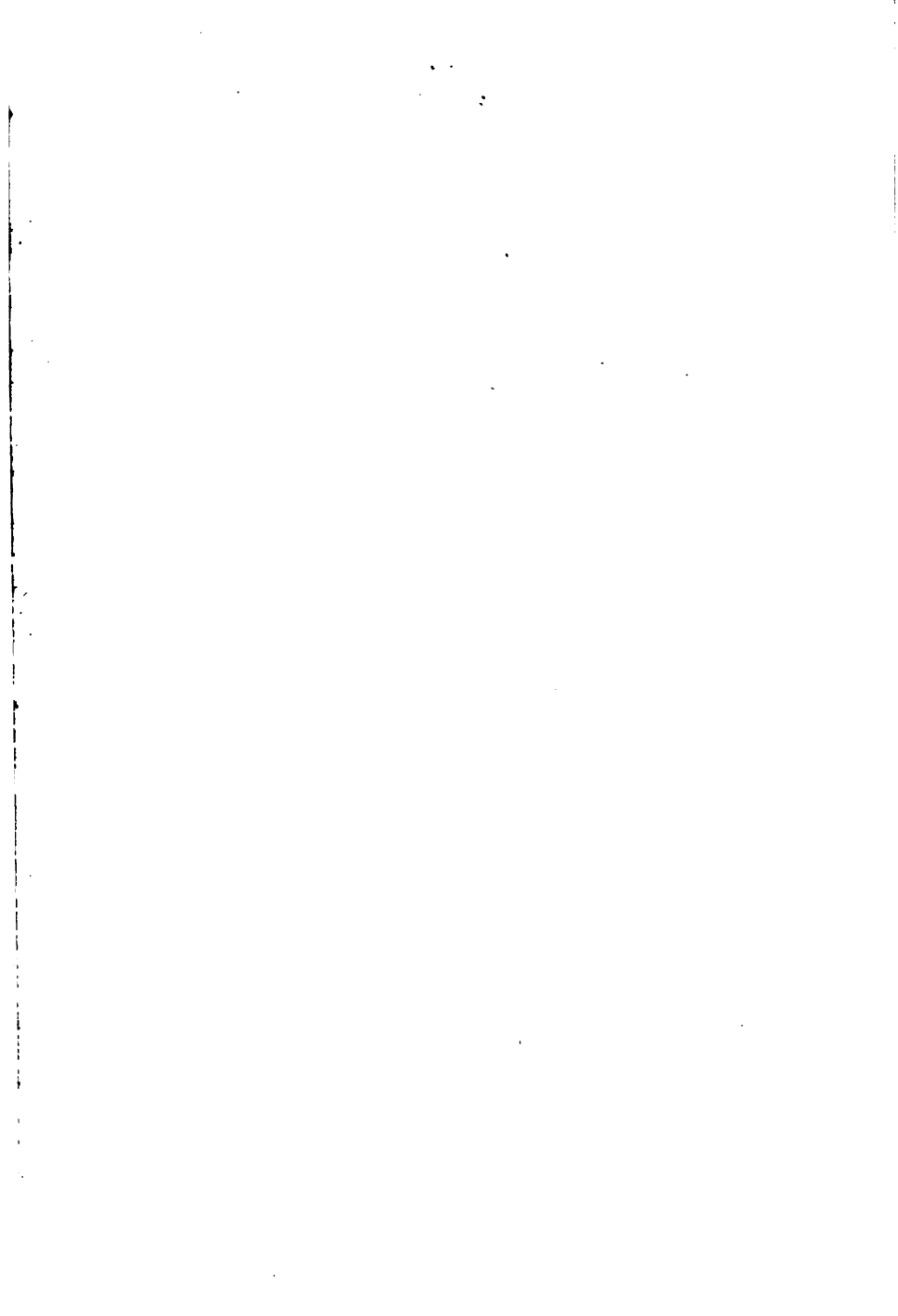
Her youngling out of heaven to ward their bed.
Pale glow flies searched deep caverns in her hair,
And for a cresset at his feet was shed
Incense of lambent larkspur. Oh to share
Those visions Youth! To drift with thee along
The hyaline of sleep and heed a song
That beckons with far call the fainting air

Whose bosom is thy pillow! And to glide
To shelves of moon bathed islands white with pearls
New garnered at the sinking of the tide!
To sluice my feet and count the scudding whirls
Wherein the moon doth paint a thousand faces,
To drain with thee sweet springs in shadowy places
Whose canopies are rose leaves and the furls

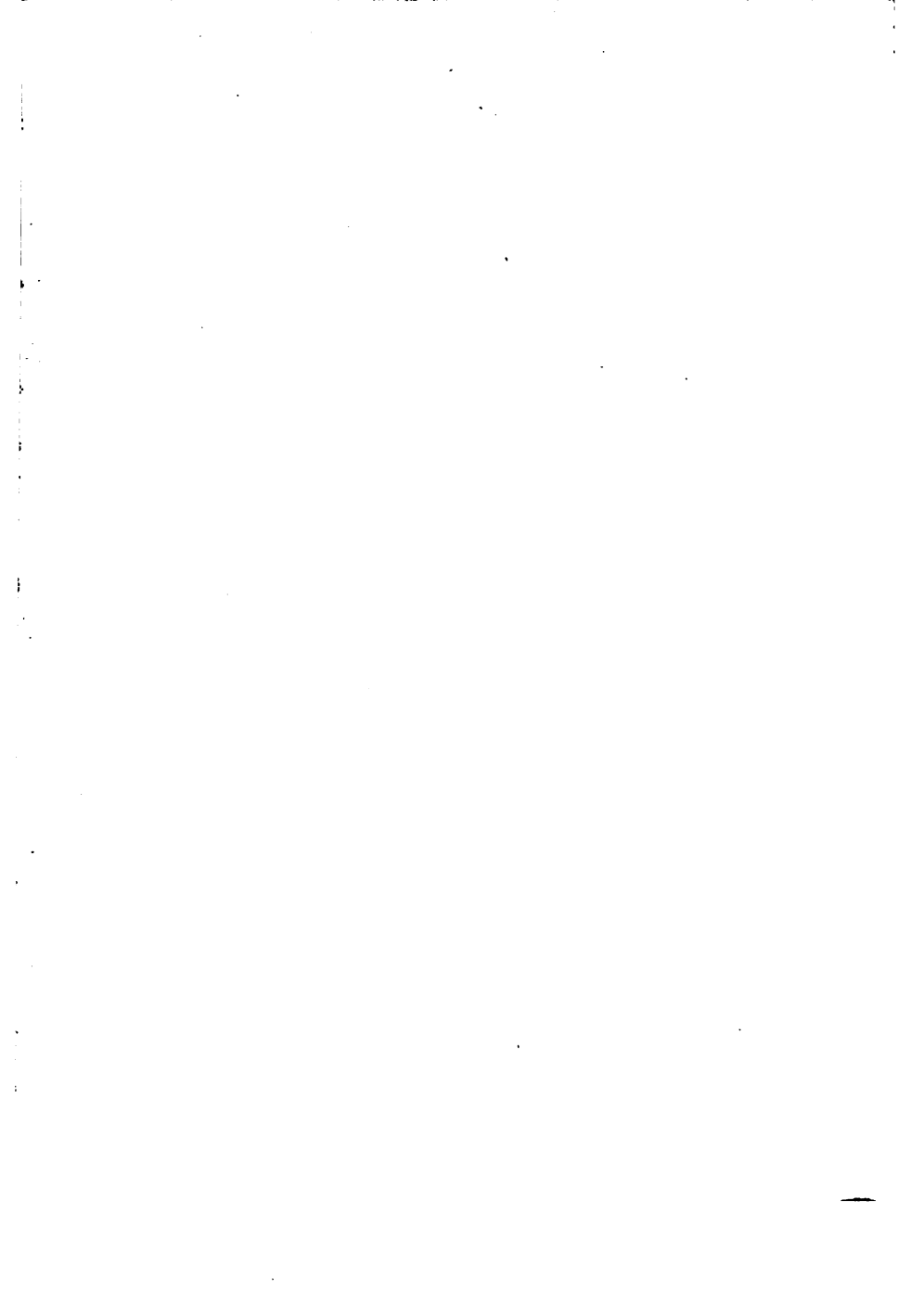
Of orchis, twined like crisps of golden hair
Clipped from pink cupids on their christening morn,
That mate each quivering star with one more fair,
Skied in lone amethyst of dew drops born
Hoarded from chrismal showers! Oh to drink
Cool gulping in such solitudes and sink
Dreamlessly into silence ere the morn!











Artism, 1886-

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